Peoria Symphony Orchestra Program Notes
March 9, 2019
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This program brings together four works from the late 18th century, opening with the Beethoven's classically-styled first symphony, a work that pays tribute to his mentor Haydn. Our principal cellist, Adriana LaRosa Ransom, then takes center stage as soloist in two works by the Italian composer and cellist Luigi Boccherini: his fine *Concerto in B-flat Major,* and his Spanish-flavored *Fandango*, which has been specially arranged for this program by Maestro Stelluto. We close with Haydn's dramatic *Symphony No. 103*, one of his great "London" symphonies—the capstones of his long career as a symphonist.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21

Beethoven composed his first symphony in 1799-1800, and it was first performed in 1800 in Vienna. Duration 25:00.

Beethoven's early career seems to have been a period of systematically mastering successive genres, starting from the small and working towards the large. While he was still a teenager in Bonn, he produced mostly small-scale *Lieder*, piano works, and chamber works. By the time he published his Op. 1 piano trios (1795) and Op. 2 piano sonatas (1796), he was a young composer who had already made the Viennese public sit up and take notice. These early works are thoroughly Classical in character, very much in the style of Mozart and Haydn—it is obvious that the younger composer had carefully studied the works of his great Viennese predecessors, and adopted many of their techniques. The Op. 2 sonatas are, in fact, dedicated to Haydn, with whom Beethoven had started composition lessons in 1792. During the late 1790s, Beethoven began to forge a more personal style and turned his attention to larger genres: the string quartet, the concerto, and, finally, to the symphony.

After nearly fifty years of evolution, the symphony was by that time the premiere form of instrumental composition—the true test of a Viennese composer's powers. Beethoven seems to have been in no hurry to pick up this challenge. He had completed most of a four-movement symphony in C Major during 1795-96, but eventually shelved this work and never finished it. Just why Beethoven failed in this first effort remains something of a mystery, but it may be that he still lacked confidence in his ability to pull off this largest of forms. He did not complete a symphony until 1800, with the *Symphony No. 1*. He seems to have completed the score in a matter of months during the winter of 1799-

1800, but sketches for some of the symphony's material date from as early as 1795. It was performed for the first time at an *Akademie* at the Hofburg Theater on April 2, 1800—a concert arranged for Beethoven's benefit. In addition to the new symphony, this program included a symphony by Mozart, numbers from Haydn's oratorio *The Creation,* Beethoven's *Septet,* Op. 20, and piano improvisations. The only Viennese newspaper critic to comment on this event praised the *Septet*, but criticized the heavy use of wind instruments in the symphony.

Compared to the eight symphonies that followed, the *Symphony No. 1* is a fundamentally conservative and cautious work, but still one that shows great individuality. Beethoven's model was the symphonic style of his erstwhile teacher, Haydn, and in fact the *Symphony No. 1* seems to have particularly close ties to one of Haydn's "London" symphonies, the *Symphony No. 97* of 1791, also in C Major. The opening movement begins in truly Haydnesque fashion, with a slow introduction (*Adagio molto*) that takes its own good time working its way towards the key of C Major. When the body of the movement begins (*Allegro molto*), strings introduce the main theme, a fanfare-style figure. The second theme is a graceful little figure that falls from the flute to the strings. The brief development section—a miniature by Beethoven's later standards—concentrates entirely on the main theme. The recapitulation restates the opening themes in a more forceful way, introducing a few slight variations. The movement ends with brief, crisp coda.

The second movement (*Andante cantabile con moto*) is also set in sonata form. If the first movement seems to pay tribute to Haydn, this lilting movement reflects the spirit of Mozart. The opening theme is presented in fugal fashion by the strings, and a secondary theme—really a skeletal outline of the first—is also introduced by the strings. At the end of the exposition, the timpani plays a dotted rhythm below a triplet line in the flute and first violins. Almost immediately in the development section, this dotted rhythm is picked up the entire string section, and it stays in the background while Beethoven works with the other material. The recapitulation brings back the opening material in slightly varied form.

True to Classical symphonic form, the third movement is a minuet (*Allegro molto e vivace*), although Beethoven's energetic and brilliant writing seems to point towards the scherzo movements of his later symphonies, rather than the courtly minuets of Haydn and Mozart. The opening panel of this movement consists of two repeated sections, ending with a distinctive off-beat passage. The central trio, also in two repeated sections, contrasts a placid woodwind figure with quick string lines. The movement ends with a repeat of the opening music.

The finale begins with a comical little introduction (*Adagio*), in which the violins begin to build a G Major scale, adding an additional note to the top of each little phrase. Just when it becomes apparent that the key is not G, but C, the tempo quickens abruptly (*Allegro molto e vivace*) and the violins stumble, almost as if by accident, on the main theme. This dancelike melody may have been one of the first parts of the *Symphony No. 1* to be composed: it appears in a counterpoint exercise that Beethoven wrote for his teacher Albrechstberger in 1795. The movement as a whole is set in sonata form, although, as in some Haydn finales, Beethoven introduces elements of rondo form as well. Both main themes are fast and lively, and the entire exposition acts like a perpetual motion machine. If anything about the *Symphony No. 1* reveals what was to come in Beethoven's later symphonies, it is the fugal development section of this movement. The opening scale passage of the first theme pervades this section, as Beethoven weaves counterpoint from the remaining material. Only after the recapitulation and at the beginning of the coda does the furious forward motion of this movement stop for a moment. We hear two briefly-held chords—as if the orchestra was taking a combined breath before launching into the closing measures.

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805)
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B-flat Major, G.482 (edited by Friedrich Grützmacher)
***Fandango* from Guitar Quintet No.4 in G Major, G.448 (arranged for cello, strings, and castanets by George Stelluto)**

Boccherini probably composed the concerto in the early 1770s. The Fandango *was initially composed in 1788, but was revised for guitar and strings in 1798. The version for cello and strings heard here was arranged for this concert. Durations 19:00 and 9:00.*

Luigi Boccherini was the most important Italian composer of instrumental music in the late 18th century, but he was also one of the period's great cellists. Born in Lucca, he studied cello with his father, and while still a teenager he and his father travelled to Vienna, where they both played in the court orchestra—it was in Vienna that young Boccherini began to attract notice for his compositions. (His older brother Giovanni went to Vienna as well, and began a successful career as a dancer and choreographer.) After a few years spent as a church musician back home in Lucca, he set out on a tour across Europe, which ended in Paris in 1768, where he performed at the famed Concerts Spirituel—one of the first great public concert series. It was in Paris that Boccherini met the Spanish ambassador to France, who promised him employment in Spain. Boccherini settled in Madrid and spent much of the rest of his life there, working first as a freelance composer and performer, and from 1770-1786 he served as chief chamber musician and

composer to the Infante Luis, brother of the Spanish king. This proved to be a wonderfully stable position that allowed him freedom to compose and publish his works. Following his patron's death in 1785, Boccherini stayed largely in Madrid, where he was able to make a living on commissions. (One of the most lucrative was a position as court composer to the King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia—though Boccherini never seems to have actually traveled to Prussia, he dutifully fulfilled his obligation to the king by sending at least a dozen works each year for the next decade.) He continued to compose actively until the turn of the 19th century, but his last years were increasingly dominated by poor health and financial troubles, and he died in 1805 in Madrid. In 1927, his remains were brought to Lucca, and reinterred with great honor in the Basilica of San Francesco.

Not surprisingly, Boccherini composed several cello concertos, at least 14 in all, which are notable for the high technical demands of the solo parts. The *Concerto in B-flat Major* is certainly the most popular today, though its history is complicated. The version of this work that was popularized in the 20th century—indeed this version of the concerto remains Boccherini's single most familiar work—is an 1895 arrangement by cellist Friedrich Grützmacher. Grützmacher's edition is actually a composite: he stitches in music from one of Boccherini's cello sonatas into the outer movements, and replaces the entire original second movement with the slow movement from an earlier concerto. Grützmacher also made substantial revisions to the solo part and added a pair of oboes to the original orchestration.

The concerto begins with a conventionally-structured movement (*Allegro moderato*) in sonata form: after a brief orchestral introduction, the cello introduces a bold main idea. A more tragic second idea begins in the cello, playing in double stops. A brief development focuses on the main theme. At the end there is an extended solo cadenza—entirely by Grützmacher, in a thoroughly 19th-century virtuoso style—and a brief coda. The slow movement (*Adagio non troppo*), borrowed by the editor from Boccherini's *Concerto in G Major, G.480*, opens with a wistful introduction, and the cello's passionate theme spins out from a single long-held pitch. This same melancholy mood carries throughout the movement until the very end, when whatever sad story the cello is telling comes to a crisis, resolved in a short solo passage. The concerto ends with a lively *Rondo* (*Allegro*), its main theme a spritely dance heard in the opening bars. There are a couple of contrasting ideas, but the main focus is the increasingly flashy solo writing culminating in a final cadenza.

Boccherini composed nearly 150 string quintets, the great majority of them of them—scored for two violins, viola, and two cellos—written while he was in the employ of the Infante: the Prince had a resident string quartet, and Boccherini himself would take the

second cello part. In the late 1790s Spanish nobleman and amateur guitarist of some skill, the Marquis de Benavente, commissioned him to write six quintets for solo guitar and string quartet, all of which were arrangements of earlier piano quintets or string quintets. The *Fandango* heard here is the final movement of his *Guitar Quintet in G Major*, but its music originally appeared in a string quintet published in 1788. It is a fairly courtly version of an earthy and rather sexy Spanish folk dance: the *Fandango* was a fast-paced couples dance accompanied by handclaps or castanets. Boccherini's *Fandango*, which included a part for castanets, uses the rhythm and the characteristic repeating harmonies of the folk dance—giving short solo interludes to guitar (solo cello in our performance), but also spreading some flashy bits around to the first violin and ensemble cello.

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Symphony No.103 in E-flat Major ("Drumroll")

> *The* Symphony No. 103 *was composed in 1794. The first performance was on March 2, 1795 in London. Duration: 30:00*

If any one person deserves to be credited as the "father of the symphony," it is Haydn. His twelve "London" symphonies are his last and greatest contributions to the genre, and the circumstances surrounding the composition of these works allowed him to expand that form in length and breadth. When his long-time patron, Prince Nicolaus Esterházy, died in 1790, Haydn was presented with almost total freedom to compose and travel. Johann Peter Salomon, a London impresario, wasted no time in engaging Haydn for his spring concert series. After some initial hesitation (which was overcome by Salomon's promise of £1200) Haydn agreed to come to England. His first English tour in 1791-92 was wildly successful, and he contracted with Salomon for a second trip to London in 1794-95. Under the terms of his contracts with Salomon, Haydn composed twelve symphonies for Salomon's London concert series during his two visits (nos. 93-98 during his first visit, and nos. 99-104 during his second). The artistic freedom of his London sojourns produced works that were somewhat longer and more varied in form than his previous symphonies. The orchestra that Salomon placed at Haydn's disposal was also larger in size and instrumentation than the group Haydn had directed at Esterháza, allowing him to experiment with new orchestral effects.

The *Symphony No. 103* was premiered at a concert staged by Salomon that the King's Theatre. Haydn had an unusually large orchestra at his disposal—some 60 players—and the concert was yet another success. The *Morning Chronicle's* review the next day was effusive:

> "Another new [symphony] , by the fertile and enchanting Haydn, was performed; which, as usual, had continual strokes of genius, both in air and harmony. The Introduction excited deepest attention, the *Allegro* charmed, the *Andante* was encored, the *Minuets*, especially the trio, were playful and sweet, and the last movement was equal, if not superior to the preceding."

The opening of the symphony, which "excited deepest attention," is one the most unusual in all of Haydn's symphonies, and gives this work its nickname. An abrupt and forceful roll on the timpani leads to a mysterious wandering phrase (*Adagio*) from the low strings and bassoons. In fact, Haydn seems to quote the Gregorian chant, *Dies irae*, in the opening four notes. Just as everything in this rather dour section seems to be setting up a symphony in C minor, Haydn begins a sprightly main idea in E-flat major (*Allegro con spirito*). A lighter theme played by woodwinds has the same character. The development works out the main theme in an intense, fugal way, until a brief pause and an entirely new idea. Haydn slyly sneaks back into a recapitulation of the main theme. The recapitulation is cut short by another surprise: the opening drum roll and solemn introductory music. Before things can get too serious, however, the movement ends with a lively coda.

The *Andante* is a set of interlocking variations on two themes borrowed from Austrian folksongs: the first a minor-key melody presented by strings alone, and the second a brighter tune that adds the woodwinds. Each theme is given two inventive variations, including a lyrical solo violin version of the second theme, and strident military version of the first. (The original audience liked this movement enough to demand an encore before the symphony could proceed.) The third movement that follows is a rather rough-edged *Menuetto*, with heavily accented downbeats making this into a peasant dance rather than a courtly one. The central trio is surprisingly delicate, a series of flowing and interweaving lines. The movement ends with a repeat of the opening music.

The finale (*Allegro con spirito*) is just as innovative as the first movement, here beginning with a brief hunting call from the two horns, and a grand pause. The horn call is repeated, but now with an insistent string accompaniment that will become the one dominant theme. This has the outlines of a typical sonata-form movement, but Haydn's imagination was strong enough to weave seemingly endless musical possibilities from this one melodic idea.

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